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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION,

REFERENDUM, NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, AMR MUSA, SADDAM  
HUSSEIN'S TRIAL; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution, Referendum,  
National Reconciliation, Amr Musa, and Saddam Hussein's  
Trial were the major editorial themes of the daily  
newspapers on October 23, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES  
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- [1A.](#) "Why Musa's Mission Was Easy"  
(Az-Zaman, independent, anti-coalition published this back-  
page editorial by Fatih Abdul Salam)

"If we examine what the media predicted about Musa's visit  
we'll find some strange issues. The media insisted that Amr  
Musa, the Arab League's Secretary General, would face  
difficulties in Baghdad due to the difficult situation in  
Iraq. On the contrary, his visit was easy and most battles  
were over by the time he arrived. He encountered three types  
of Iraqis:

- 1) Iraqis who had died and relinquished power.
- 2) Iraqis who were dying but clinging to power.
- 3) Iraqis who were dying but still dreaming of gaining  
power.

"These three types represent the original characteristics of  
Iraqi politicians-force is the common theme among them. Some  
might say the democratic election and referendum has proven  
the opposite but let us not deceive ourselves. We have  
practiced democracy under occupation and although we  
recognize a certain type of it, what will it look like when  
the occupation leaves? Our democracy is protected by foreign  
forces.

"There are poles that Washington used to erect democracy but  
when the occupiers leave we will be under a tent of  
democracy without any poles-though democracy will remain  
because the occupation will not leave Iraq!"

- [1B.](#) "No"  
(Al-Sabah, affiliated with the pro-coalition Iraqi Media  
Network, published this front-page editorial by Muhammad  
Abdul Jabbar)

"Those who headed to the ballot boxes on referendum day  
(October 15) and voted 'no' to the constitution deserve our  
respect. Yes, they are against the constitution and they  
rejected it but they ensured their participation in the  
peaceful political process and that is the most important  
thing at this decisive stage. They followed civilized  
behavior in dealing with political issues. They did not  
brandish weapons, they did not fire a single bullet, they  
did not throw a hand grenade or detonate a car bomb against  
the voting centers, they did not assassinate people. but  
simply headed to voting centers and voted 'no.' Perhaps they  
were not sure that their no-votes would stop the  
constitutional process. They probably did not have time to  
organize an advertising campaign to influence public opinion-  
perhaps they do not have funds for such campaigns...  
However, they decided to be honest with themselves and with  
others.

"Real democracy needs peaceful political opposition because  
in a democracy there is no political majority (I would like  
to emphasize political, not ethnic or religious sects)  
ruling the country with absolute authorities and without  
effective opposition. Democracy means a state of settled

establishments and enterprises based on the rule of law; it means a vital and effective civil society and qualified government capable of securing public services. There are many reasons to create opposition against any government (inside or out of the parliament) but the most important thing about the opposition is that it be peaceful.

"What is important about the opposition is it should know the principles of the democratic political game and respect it. This will grant and protect the political process from all improper struggles. In addition, this is the why we respect those who participated by voting 'no' to the draft constitution. We also have great respect for those who voted 'yes' because the political process should never marginalize other sects and in this way we'll grant credibility to democratic process and guarantee our political security which will lead to social security and free us from fear."

**C. "The People's Tribunal"**

(Al-Fourat independent anti-coalition published this page-three editorial by Abdul Zahra Al-Talqani)

"Saddam is not merely an accused person standing trial before Iraqi justice, but rather he is a convicted criminal who is responsible for committing numerous crimes against his people--and this is the people's tribunal against him.

"It is typical that Saddam keep quiet in court, which represents the people's will, because what could he possibly say about the millions of citizens he sent to death throughout Iraq.

What murders could he deny? How could he defend himself in the middle of a sea of blood? But the people have not kept silent and have repeated their call for the death of this criminal.

"No one escaped from Saddam's sadistic mentality of aggression; even those in areas supposedly filled with his supporters didn't escape his wrath. He thought he would achieve immortality by erecting pictures and statues of himself or by the daily commissioning of poems of flattery, but all attempts were illusionary and ephemeral. Tyrants throughout history have always been dumped into the garbage and individuals such as Saddam do not deserve any dignity; they must accept their punishment in this life and on the Day of Judgment."

**D. "Lessons of the Referendum"**

(Al-Ihtijah Al-Akhar, weekly, anti-coalition, affiliated with the [Sunni] Liberation and Reconciliation Bloc led by Mish'an Al-Jabouri, published this page-three unattributed editorial)

"There are important lessons learned from the referendum, the first being that the percentage of 'no' votes in some provinces was unexpected; especially on behalf of sectarian and religious parties who were surprised by results showing that 45% of citizens in Najaf voted 'no.' Percentages that were similar to those in other central and south-central provinces. These influential and tyrannical parties should learn a lesson from the voting results of Najaf's citizens and face the truth that Iraqis do not want their state built on the foundations of a religious and sectarian base.

"The results from Najaf and other provinces have disappointed those parties and surely the coming parliamentary election will bring more surprises for them. The rejecters of the constitution who were ready to topple the referendum have suffered division amongst their ranks when the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) altered its stance due to incomprehensible circumstances which created disappointment for citizens of the [Sunni] western provinces. Therefore, some of them have rejected voting altogether while others were confused over how to vote.

"We have mentioned many times that there is no authority for the Sunni Arab that can represent their affairs, because these groups have been founded according to a secular liberal ideology, although they respect the role of religious authorities.

"The coming months will prove that a state based on religion and sectarianism will never be constituted in Iraq--at anytime."

**E. "Saddam's Trial and the Referendum"**

(Al-Ittihad, pro-coalition, affiliated with the PUK led by Jalal Talabani, published this page-four editorial by Abdul Moniem Al-A'ssam)

"There is a strong connection between the referendum on the constitution and Saddam's trial--not only in the close dates but also because they represent a transition from the non-constitutional stage to the constitutional stage--a transition from fabricated referendums, which oppose all the natural laws of the universe and result in only 'yes' votes rather than allowing the possibility of 'no' votes as reflected in the natural world.

"While Saddam entered his cage and faced accusations about his crimes in DuJail, Halabja, Al-Anfal, the mass graves, killing of the innocent in torture chambers, the destruction of the marshes, and the beheading of groves of date palms, the referendum on the constitution represented the prosecutor who will not be satisfied until punishing the criminal that harmed millions (regardless of the outcome); it is the voters who will deliver their justice.

"There was tension among the media when the tyrant stood in his cage-it reminded Iraqis of the era of dictatorship when they lived at the whim of Saddam's mercy. No one expected to ever see Saddam questioned by a judge. Actually, no one expected they would live to see the day Saddam faced justice. In order to put these two historical events into suitable historic perspective we need to comprehend the following fact: Saddam's trial is the first legal questioning of an Arab leader for the crimes he committed, so it's regarded as a trial for all Arab regimes which have deteriorated to the lowest standards. On the other hand the referendum in Iraq is regarded as a no-go zone throughout the region because it can't be controlled by rulers.

"In spite of Saddam's pledge of innocence, and even if he had pleaded guilty, his presence in the cage to face crimes against humanity (which even monsters do not face) is regarded as transition of an era-from the law of the jungle to one of justice. The people have broken free of their shackles and forced the evil ruler to face his fate."

#### **1F. "Neither Victors nor Vanquished"**

(Al-Fourat, independent, anti coalition, published this back-page editorial by Dawood Al-Farhan)

"There is synchronicity between the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Musa's visit to Baghdad on a mission to promote inter-Iraqi dialogue and achieve what was called a national accord and the first national unity conference in Baghdad attended by more than one thousand political leaders representing sixty Iraqi parties, Iraqi-Arab political movements, and international organizations. Both the visit and the conference are attempts to free Iraq and Iraqis from the dark tunnel the American occupation put us in since April 2003, causing chaos, violence, and doubts, which threaten Iraq's unity.

"The draft constitution failed to relieve us from serious danger and regardless of the results of the referendum, with all the rumors of vote-rigging we should all agree there will be no victors and no vanquished. Iraqis went to the ballot boxes to express their opinions freely by either voting 'yes' or 'no' to the constitution but both are Iraqis and have rights and responsibilities towards their country. This is the foundation of a real democracy in Iraq, more than one attitude, more than one opinion and the ability to speak freely.

"Amr Musa was articulate when he announced that he was heading to Baghdad carrying an Arab initiative aimed to support Iraq and reinforce Iraqi-Arab dialogue. In addition, he will present his initiative to Iraqi political leaders on behalf of all Arab countries as the representative of the Arab League. His mission is to seek an Iraqi national accord as a supplementary part related to the political process taking place in Iraq. To what extent Amr Musa will succeed in his precise and difficult mission depends on the Iraqi government's attitude, the U.S. government's attitude as an occupation force and the attitudes of others such as the opposition, independent parties, fighters, and civil society organizations.

"The Iraqi government will maintain its stance (as they usually declare during Arab League meetings) rejecting principles of national reconciliation claiming that there is no controversy or arguments between different Iraqi sects. Amr Musa will hear a lot from others who are not affiliated with the Iraqi government--those who are now talking, in the first national unity conference, about an Iraqi national project to confront the sectarian and ethnic devastation that currently dominates our country.

"After the referendum results, it would be better for the transitional government, its National Assembly and the Presidential Council to quit their political arrogance and build upon the previous election because voters who rejected the constitution and voted 'no' are more numerous than expected in all Iraqi provinces--even in the northern part of Iraq.

The Iraqi government should consider those voters; they will significantly influence the next election. The Iraqi government should cooperate with Amr Musa's mission otherwise they will blow their political message about national unity, commitments to the Arab League compact and their respect for human rights. In any case, this government is on its way out."

#### **1G. "People Want a New Iraq, Stable and Prosperous"**

(Al-Taakhi, KDP, pro coalition, published this page-five editorial by Adil Badir Al-Ryahi)

"The elected national government of our new Iraq is seeking to reset the basis for security and stability all over the country--in order to be able to build national institutions and arrive at a new, stable, secure and prosperous country, which would be able to hold a historical and respectful position in the world.

"While the enemies (the terrorists) seek to destroy the infrastructure and work hard to publicize sectarian and ethnic sedition, they overlook the fact that national unity and the power of the interior front has made sure this card has fallen forever.

"Further, the noble Iraqi people are the only ones making decisions; they are looking forward to building a federal, new, secure and thriving Iraq--one whose land is shared by everyone; one which is not manipulated by one group or another; one in which society achieves construction and prosperity by standing behind the national leadership represented by the new government. There also is a national accountability shared by all--the cooperation and immediate informing about the safe houses of the enemies in order to reach them in the early stages, before the situation become aggravated and deters security and stability. Concerned national institutions also should take into account the fields of security, stability and cooperation with neighboring countries in order to approve joint security treaties and prevent infiltration.

"The prosperity of the country is also the responsibility of civil institutions that should engage their pioneering role in providing the best essential services for Iraqi citizens. They should secure food requirements for all Iraqis by getting and providing the items in the food ration cards and ensuring fair distribution for all Iraqi families.

"There also is another role to be played by productive institutions: one which guarantees that the requirements of the local market and imports are covered, as is any surplus of Iraqi production outside the country, which would provide foreign currency which will help the economy flourish and prosper and which may ensure Iraqis happy and affluent lives."

SATTERFIELD